Mandan language

Mandan (Mandan: *Nų́ų́ʔetaa íroo*) is an extinct Siouan language of North Dakota in the United States.

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Mandan	
Nų́ų́ʔetaa íroo	
Native to	United States
Region	Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota
Ethnicity	Mandan
Extinct	9 December 2016, with the death of Edwin Benson[1]
Revival	Taught at Fort Berthold Community College
Language family	Siouan • Western Siouan ▪ **Mandan**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`mhq`
Glottolog	`mand1446 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/mand1446)`[2]
Linguasphere	`64-AAB-a`

Use and revitalization efforts

By 2009, there was just one fluent speaker of Mandan, Dr. Edwin Benson (1931–2016).[3] The language is being taught in local school programs to encourage the use of the language.[4]

Mandan is taught at Fort Berthold Community College along with the Hidatsa and Arikara languages.[3] Linguist Mauricio Mixco of the University of Utah has been involved in fieldwork with remaining speakers since 1993. As of 2007, extensive materials in the Mandan language at the college and at the North Dakota Heritage Center, in Bismarck, North Dakota, remained to be processed, according to linguists.[5]

The MHA Language Project has created language learning materials for Mandan, including a vocabulary app, a dictionary, and several books in the language. They also provide a summer learning institute and materials for teachers.[6]

Classification

Mandan was initially thought to be closely related to Hidatsa and Crow. However, since Mandan has had language contact with Hidatsa and Crow for many years, the exact relationship between Mandan and other Siouan languages (including Hidatsa and Crow) has been obscured and is currently undetermined. Thus, Mandan is most often considered to be a separate branch of the Siouan family.

Mandan has two main dialects: Nuptare and Nuetare.

Only the Nuptare variety survived into the 20th century, and all speakers were bilingual in Hidatsa. In 1999, there were only six fluent speakers of Mandan still alive.[7] Edwin Benson, the last surviving fluent Mandan speaker, died in 2016.[8]

The language received much attention from White Americans because of the supposedly lighter skin color of the Mandan people, which they speculated was due to an ultimate European origin. In the 1830s Prince Maximilian of Wied spent more time recording Mandan over all other Siouan languages and prepared a comparison list of Mandan and Welsh words (he thought that the Mandan might be displaced Welsh).[9] The idea of a Mandan/Welsh connection was also supported by George Catlin.[10]

Will and Spinden (p. 188) reports that the medicine men had their own secret language.

Phonology

Mandan has the following consonant phonemes:

	Labial	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Velar	Glottal
Stop	p	t		k	ʔ
Fricative		s	ʃ	x	h
Sonorant	w	r			

/w/ and /r/ become [m] and [n] before nasal vowels, and /r/ is realized as [^{n}d] word-initially.[11]

	Front				Central				Back			
	Oral		Nasal		Oral		Nasal		Oral		Nasal	
	short	long	short	long	short	long	short	long	short	long	short	long
Close	i	iː	ĩ	ĩː					u	uː	ũ	ũː
Mid	e	eː							o	oː		
Open					a	aː	ã	ãː				

Morphology

Mandan is a subject–object–verb language.

Mandan has a system of allocutive agreement and so different grammatical forms may be used that depend on the gender of the addressee. Questions asked of men must use the suffix -oʔsha: the suffix -oʔnq is used to ask of women. Likewise, the indicative suffix is -oʔsh to address men, -oʔre to address women. The same goes for the imperative: -ta (male), -nq (female).[12]

Mandan verbs include a set of postural verbs, which encode the shapes of the subject of the verb:[13]

wérex	ną́ko?sh
wérex	ną́k-o?sh
pot	sit-PRESENT
'A pot was there (sitting).'	

mį́?tixteną	téroomąko?sh
mį́?ti-xte-ną	té-roomąko?sh
village-big-EMPHATIC	stand-NARRATIVE.PAST
'There was a big village.'	

mą́ątah	mą́komąko?sh
mą́ątah	mą́k-omąko?sh
river	lie-NARRATIVE.PAST
'The river was there.'	

The English translations are not "A pot was sitting there," "A big village stood there," or "The river lay there." That reflects the fact that the postural categorization is required in such Mandan locative statements.

Vocabulary

Mandan, like many other North American languages, has elements of sound symbolism in its vocabulary. A /s/ sound often denotes smallness/less intensity, /ʃ/ denotes medium-ness, /x/ denotes largeness/greater intensity:[14]

- *síire* "yellow"
- *shíire* "tawny"
- *xíire* "brown"
- *seró* "tinkle"
- *xeró* "rattle"

Compare the similar examples in Lakhota.

Notes

1. "Edwin Benson, last-known fluent speaker of Mandan, passes away at 85" (http://www.kfyrtv.c om/content/news/Edwin-Benson-last-known-fluent-speaker-of-Mandan-passes-away-at-85-40 5723515.html). Retrieved 10 November 2016.
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Mandan" (http://glott olog.org/resource/languoid/id/mand1446). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. *The Missoulian.* 11 May 2009. Jodi Rave. "The last speaker: UND to honor Mandan, last to speak Nu'eta as 1st language (http://www.missoulian.com/articles/2009/05/11/news/mtregiona l/news06.txt)."

4. "Last known fluent Mandan speaker honored" (http://indiancountrynews.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4931&Itemid=65). *News From Indian Country*. Retrieved 27 September 2012.
5. "Rancher, linguist working to preserve Mandan language" (http://indiancountrynews.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1144&Itemid=65). *News From Indian Country*. 7 August 2007. Retrieved 27 September 2012.
6. "Home" (http://www.mandanlanguage.org/). *MHA Language Project - Mandan*. Retrieved 5 January 2019.
7. Personal communication from Mauricio Mixco in 1999, reported in Parks & Rankin. 2001. p. 112.
8. Skurzewski, Joe (9 December 2016). "Edwin Benson, last-known fluent speaker of Mandan, passes away at 85" (http://www.kfyrtv.com/content/news/Edwin-Benson-last-known-fluent-speaker-of-Mandan-passes-away-at-85-405723515.html). kfyrtv.com. Retrieved 13 December 2016.
9. Chafe. 1976b. pp. 37–38.
10. Catlin, G. *Die Indianer Nordamerikas* Verlag Lothar Borowsky
11. Wood & Irwin 2001, p. 349
12. Hollow. 1970. p. 457 (in Mithun 1999. p. 280).
13. Mithun, Marianne (2001). *The Languages of Native North America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 115–116. ISBN 978-0-521-29875-9.
14. Hollow & Parks 1980. p. 82.

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External links

- "Native American Audio Collections: Mandan" (https://web.archive.org/web/20170214032053/https://amphilsoc.org/exhibit/natamaudio/mandan). *American Philosophical Society*. Archived from the original (http://www.amphilsoc.org/exhibit/natamaudio/mandan) on 14 February 2017. Retrieved 20 May 2013.
- Mandan Indian Language (Ruetare) (http://www.native-languages.org/mandan.htm), native-languages.org
- OLAC resources in and about the Mandan language (http://www.language-archives.org/language/mhq)